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ABSTRACT

This paper surveys methods for teaching reading and writing in kindergarten. The paper stresses the importance of accepting a child's own efforts, including invented spelling, and providing an atmosphere that encourages experimentation. Chapter 1 introduces the topic; chapter 2 provides a historical overview. The current state of the art is discussed in chapter 3, and chapter 4 presents a needs assessment. Chapter 5 discusses new directions, such as whether computers can help build reading and writing skills in kindergarten. Each chapter ends with footnotes, a 2-item annotated bibliography, and a bibliography. (SR)

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METHODOLOGIES OF READING AND WRITING IN KINDERGARTEN

BY: JILL LEVIN

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" Methodologies of Reading and Writing in Kindergarten "

Introduction

For many years controversy has raged over methods of teaching reading and writing to Kindergarteners. It has been demonstrated that young children know more about their language than is generally supposed. Chomsky has proposed that writing may be easier than reading, and that it may actually develop earlier. [1] Writing is a more self - involved task than reading. It originates from within the writer and is known to the writer in advance. On the other hand, reading requires the reader to be able to penetrate someone else's use of language and meaning, which is a more difficult task for the beginner.

Whether we prefer the title " reading readiness," " early reading instruction," or " kindergarten readiness," the topic is a difficult one. On the one hand we have educators such as Hymes and Sheldon saying, " Touch not the little children." [2] On the other hand, we are confronted with more academic and demanding Kindergarten programs. It is not a question of phonics or no phonics, but rather a question of which phonics, when, and how much. Early reading methodologies cannot be resolved on an either/or basis. Here the questions are more likely to be what kind of instruction, for whom and how we can accomplish this instruction.

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Methods of teaching reading to Kindergarteners usually fall within a limited set of approaches - from basal reader programs to language - experience programs to the teaching of phonics. Many professional educators recognize the merits of a language - experience approach to beginning reading. However, relatively few classroom teachers feel secure in such an unstructured one. Experiences are never the same for any two children. One should not expect an orderly progression of skill learning to be possible in a language - experience approach. The emphasis is on meaningful involvement in the reading because of its relevance to the child who is reading it.

Teachers often opt for structured basal readers or phonetically oriented methods that require young children to learn sounds represented by individual letters, blending these to make words, or apply letter/sound rules to an unknown word. The " magic " of reading quickly disappears when a five year old gets the mistaken idea of what reading is when they spend all their time focusing on isolated elements of print that do not seem to be connected to any discernible meaning. [3]

Children can benefit from phonics instruction at an early age if the methods used are associated with children's earliest reading and writing - using experimental reading and invented spelling. Invented spelling is beginning writer's ability to write words by attending to their sound units and associating letters with them in a systematic, though unconventional way. Too often teachers indulge or tolerate invented spelling rather than respect it and use it as a learning tool.

Reading and writing are part of the world of children. Experience tells us that children do produce written communications before they enter school, but often their written word is not decipherable by adults. Thus, it is overlooked and is not employed in beginning literacy instruction. Children's independent writing readily reveals their level of understanding, but few teachers set out to discover it and design a program that will tap it. They seldom consider including writing prior to, or even along with their reading programs. [4]

Reading must be kept in constant relationship to writing if kindergarteners are to understand the concept that print carries a message. The advantages of recording children's words are first, that the child is producing a message and second, to demonstrate the concept of authorship. The very method of recording children's language helps them realize that the teacher places value on what they say.

The one methodology that must underline all reading and writing done by kindergarteners is a willingness to accept the child's own efforts and provide the simple materials needed for that effort. Unfortunate attitudes in our society may suppress this willingness in many schools: a fear that the child's own efforts will lead to " bad habits," a belief that English spelling is bizarre, and a corresponding reliance on complex educational devices that bear the stamp of expert approval. We can no longer assume that a kindergarten child must approach reading and writing as an untrained animal approaches a maze. [5] In the classroom, an informed teacher should expect that seemingly bizarre spelling in the five

year old writings may represent a system of abstract phonological relations of which adults are quite unaware.

Concrete learning experiences are the basis for teaching kindergarten children. We do have to deal with increasingly structured and demanding curricula in reading and writing at this level. However, it can be implemented in a hands - on creative way so children can still enjoy their kindergarten experience, and not be part of an " academic boot camp." [6] The key is how reading and writing is handled by the kindergarten teacher. Young children are literally enchanted by words. This enchantment can be suffocated by the very methods used to teach reading and writing in the classroom. Reading for kindergarteners cannot be a mere skill in decoding with" agglomerations of endlessly repeated words pretending to be stories." [7]

There are basically two different ways in which reading and writing and the learning of it in kindergarten can be experienced: either as something of great practical value, important if one wants to get ahead in life; or as the source of unlimited knowledge and fascination. Which of these two ways or in what combination of them the five year old will experience being taught reading and writing depends upon the methodologies used. The image of literacy impressed on him by those who significantly shape his views of things during his most impressionable years is decisive.

Footnotes

1 - Chomsky, Carol., " Write First, Read Later." Childhood Education, Volume 43, (1971); pages 296 - 299.

2 - Hillerich, Robert L., " An Interpretation of Research in Reading Readiness." Elementary English, Volume 43, (April 1966), pages 359 - 364.

3 - McClure, Amy A., " Predictable Books: Another Way To Teach Reading." Teaching Exceptional Children, (Summer 1985), pages 267 - 272.

4 - Read, Charles., " Pre-School Children's Knowledge of English Phonology." Harvard Educational Review, Volume 41, (1971), pages 1 - 34.

5 - Ibid.,page 19.

6 - Epstein, Kitty K., " Of Kindergarten, Workbooks, and Boot Camps." Newsday, October 1987.

7 - Bettelheim, Bruno and Zelan, Karen., On Learning To Read, Alfred A Knopf, Inc., New York, 1982.

Annotated Bibiography

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This investigation has demonstrated that children in the early stages of literacy learning can be expected to write meaningful communications. It is logical to expect reading and writing to interact and reinforce each other in the early as well as later stages of learning. Writing, therefore, should be an integral part of early programs in reading. By writing, children are able to work at their level of understanding and view themselves as writers. Teachers who observe these children gain a greater understanding of their thinking. Such understanding is vital in that it affects the way in which the teacher conceptualizes children as learners. This new look at learners should lead to methodologies that operate at a level that is meaningful and worthwhile to the kindergartener. An environment in which children feel free to experiment and risk error allows for maximum developmental language learning.

Annotated Bibliography

Bettelheim, Bruno and Zelan, Karen., On Learning To Read, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1982.

This book presents a strong opinion on the uses and methods of reading for young children - how reading extends the imagination, the emotions and the mind. It also reveals the way in which our educational establishment, because of its deep misapprehension of the purposes of early reading, is actually responsible for many of the difficulties children encounter in learning to read. If the kindergarten child did not know it before, it will soon be impressed on him that of all school learning, nothing compares in importance with reading. It is of unparalleled significance. In their book, Bettleheim and Zelan stress why how it is taught is so important. The methods in which learning to read is experienced by the child will determine how he will view learning in general, how he will conceive of himself as a learner and even as a person.

Historical Overview

Questions about the time to begin reading and writing instruction and the various methods to do so are invariably bound up with the concept of " reading readiness." When the term " reading readiness " was first used in the 1920's, the common interpretation was that readiness is the product of maturation - more specifically, of a certain stage in the child's development which equips him with the requirements for success in learning to read. The initial assigned meaning of " readiness " stemmed from some of the beliefs of G. Stanley Hall, for it was his teachings that dominated the psychological world at that time. Hall's beliefs were rooted in a doctrine of recapitulation. " The most general formulation of all the facts of development that we yet possess is in the law of recapitulation. This law declares that the individual, in his development, passes through stages similiar to those through which the race has passed, and in the same order." [1] Since the learning process was being assigned only secondary importance, progress through these " inevitable stages " was explained with a reference to maturation. Later, the special attention to maturation was continued in the writings of Arnold Gesell, a student of Hall. Gesell referred to processes like " intrinsic growth," " neural ripening," and " unfolding behavior." [2]

Since the 1920's were permeated by the ideas of Hall and Gesell, the one explanation that was both proposed and accepted place the blame on the children's lack of readiness when reading methodologies began. In Hall - Gesell terminology,

the children were having difficulty because at the time a method of instruction was initiated, they had not yet reached that stage of development which would allow them to be successful. The solution? - within the Hall - Gesell framework, the obvious one was to have the schools postpone instruction until the children matured and became ready for it.

Early in the 1930's, while other researchers were involved in the " doctrine of postponement," Carleton Washburne, a leader in the popular Progressive Education Movement, introduced the concept of mental age. In a research report written in 1931, it was proposed that a child is ready to read when he has a mental age of 6.5 years and it is only then that he should be introduced to reading.

Just a few years later, Arthur Gates and his associates published a series of articles contrary to the Washburne proposal. Gates observed, " Reading is begun by very different materials, methods, and general procedures, some of which a pupil can master at the mental age of five with reasonable ease, others of which would give him difficulty at the mental age of seven." [3] Yet the Washburne doctrine of postponement continued to be supported due to the prominence of the man himself.

Right up through the 1950's, reading for children younger than six was hardly being encouraged. Instead, both professional educators and society as a whole openly frowned upon this type of precociousness and predicted nothing but problems for early readers once school methods of instruction were begun. Some soothsayers added to the gloom by claiming that even if problems were avoided, the earlier learning

would have no positive payoff in the future. It was maintained that children who begin to read before their classmates would not excel in ability in later years. The correctness of these predictions was taken for granted. One consequence was frequent warnings to parents not to teach their youngsters to read. Another consequence was school policies that explicitly forbade reading instruction during kindergarten.

Most schools were untouched by rather dramatic developments that became highly visible in the early 1960's. Policies governing school practices still sopported the no reading dictum for kindergartens. Impetus for a change began to take root in an educational revolution that quickly followed the launching of the satellite Sputnik by the Russians in October 1957. The 1960's are referred to as a revolutionary period for early childhood education. Unprecedented attention went to the young child and to the unique importance of the early years for his eventual intellectual development. An atmosphere took hold that was characterized by the demands, " Let's teach more in our schools and let's teach it earlier." [4] Fostered by what must have been a national inferiority complex, the decade gave bery little attention to the basic nature of readiness. In fact, some who were urging that reading be started even before the kindergarten year, seemed either to ignore the factor of readiness or to take it for granted that all children are ready before the age of five. Those who did deal with the concept stressed that many aspects of readiness are learned and therefore can be taught.

Given the " Let's teach it earlier " atmosphere, one major flaw existed. It focused only on the child getting

ahead, thus omitting attention to an equally important variable; namely the reading and writing methodologies that would be available. It failed to recognize that whether or not a child is ready or whether or not he will be successful in learning to read, depends not only on his own abilities, but also on the methods and quality of instruction that is offered.

One source of pressure that developed fairly quickly was a bombardment by books and articles bearing titles like, " Why Waste Our Five Year Olds?" [5] A direct consequence was efforts by kindergarten teachers to teach reading even though they had no professional preparation for such instruction. Not knowing what else to do, they naturally turned to manuals and workbooks. Since most administrators associated reading with materials like basals and workbooks, they rarely encouraged teachers to try something else with the five year olds. Thus, there was little incentive for kindergarten teachers to rise above the " same old thing." This meant that the kindergarten teachers who had both the competence and motivation to develop methodologies that were imaginative and child - centered had to prove that they were teaching reading even though they were not using the usual textbooks. Kindergarten teachers were caught in the battle of regarding early reading and writing as an integration of the child's physical, psychological and soci - cultural functioning. Yet basal readers and workbooks were forever on the horizon.

During this time, a woman named Sylvia Ashton - Warner proclaimed a most primitive method of teaching reading and

writing to young children. She called it Organic Reading. [6] Essentially it is a method and an approach to beginning reading and writing. The term " organic reading " is derived from the notion that is is related to the organism itself. It is " intrinsic " rather that " extrinsic," and relies on the innermost thought - language of children contrasted the the awkward, unrealistic and stilted language of basal readers. The " key vocabulary " for each child is different and takes considerable time and patience to discover it. The learning of the vocabulary is achieved through what Miss Ashton - Warner calls the " one - look " cards, an intensely personal collection of words.

It is reported in Teacher that children who spend four months on a set of words in the basal reader can learn an equally large number of their own words in four minutes! Warner warns against the teaching of words that have no emotional significance as an introduction to reading, for she writes that they may teach that words mean nothing and that reading is undesirable. Words that come from the usual basal reader are considered as being from the " outside " whereas words that come from the child's own language experiences are from the " inside " ..... organic. Warner goes on to describe how vocabulary building is followed by writing.

" The drama of these writings could never be captured in a bought book... one one book could ever hold the variety of subjects that appears collectively ... each morning. Moreover, it is written in the language that they use themselves. These books they write are the most dramatic and pathetic and colorful things I've ever seen on pages." [7]

Many professional educators recognized the merits of Warner's approach to beginning reading, but relatively few teachers felt secure in such an unstructured atmosphere.

The 1970's was a time of numerous studies on which method of teaching reading would be the most successful. In 1971, Carol Chomsky [8] observed that some young children show spontaneous interest in creating words long before they can read. She suggested that allowing and encouraging such " invented spelling " is a natural beginning step in learning to read and should precede any formal instruction in recognizing words written by others. However, controversy has centered on the relationship of invented spelling to the methodologies involved in teaching reading, and on the effect of invented spelling on the acquisition of standard spelling. When Chomsky wrote, " Children ought to learn how to read by creating their own spellings for familiar words as a beginning," [9] her qualifying phrase " as a beginning " was overlooked.

It was also about this time that educational companies began to reap the benefits and fit the needs for a richer curriculum in the kindergarten. The Alpha - Time [10] program literally burst upon the scene, lauding a child - centered environment and allowing physical involvement through manipulatives and games in a fun and fantasy atmosphere. Again, the focus was swinging back to the development of the child - physically, psychologically and socially - rather than just on the act of reading. Teachers were given large blow - up dolls. Each doll represented a " Letter Person," and each letter person had his own sound. Letter People

were divided into two groups. Letter boys represented the consonant sounds and letter girls represented the vowel sounds. For Example: Mr. D had delicious donuts, Mr. F had funny feet, Miss A said A - choo, and Miss E did exercises. An illustrated professional guide offered teachers various methods and strategies of presenting the program. There were letter people songs, letter people coloring masters and letter people records and stories.

A major flaw in Alpha - Time was that phonics became the cure - all. Methodologies that direct attention to individual letters and words lead to slow, hesitant reading habits. Children do not hear themselves reading fluently and so are unable to develop an awareness of the flow of meaning that characterizes " real " reading. [11] There is also no perfect one - to - one correspondance between aspects of sound and print. For instance, there may be several different ways to pronounce an individual letter. A single word might have different pronunciations for the same spelling. For example: the word " read " or the word " wind," or different spellings for the same pronunciation: sow/sew or right/write. Readers do learn to make appropriate distinctions when given opportunities to make such decisions within a meaningful language experience - based text.

Comparisons of research on the many arguments for and against early reading and writing methods would be deflated if we were more careful about two points. First, we cannot debate in terms of workbooks or no workbooks, readiness or no readiness and so on. There are different kinds of these things and we need to be more specific. Secondly, we will

make little progress if we continue to pit the past against the present. Reading and writing for the five year old have an integral relationship. Most curricula is still developmentally based. Yet the days when the kindergarten curriculum was limited to finger - painting, shoe - tying and resting are over. However, benefits will be reaped only if methods of instruction are altered to accommodate the kindergartener's reading and writing needs. This means that schools undertaking such programs must change their methodologies from first grade on so that what is accomplished in the kindergarten can be used and extended in subsequent years. Kindergarten reading and writing, therefore, is not an isolated event, but rather something that ought to have repercussions throughout the entire school. If reading and writing instruction is initiated earlier than has been traditional, it also ought to be a kind that will add enjoyment and greater self - esteem to the fifth year of a child's life.

Footnotes

1 - Durkin, Dolores., " What Does Research Say About The Time To Begin Reading Instruction?" Journal of Educational Research, Volume 64 (October 1970) pages 52 - 56.

2 - Ibid., page 53.

3 - Gates, Arthur I., " The Necessary Mental Age For Beginning Reading," Elementary School Journal, Volume 37 (March 1937) pages 497 - 508.

4 - Durkin Dolores., " Facts About Pre - First Grade Reading." The Kindergarten Child and Reading, International Reading Association, (1977) Newark, Delaware, page 10.

5 - Simmons, Virginia C., " Why Waste Our Five Year Olds?" Harpers Magazine, (April 1960) pages 71 - 73.

6 - Warner, Sylvia - Ashton., Teacher, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1963.

7 - Ibid., page 52

8 - Chomsky, Carol., " Write First, Read Later." Childhood Education, Volume 47, Number 6, (March 1971) pages 296 - 299.

9 - Ibid., page 297.

10 - Perle Ruth Lerner., Songs of the Letter People, New Dimensons in Education, Inc., Norwalk, Connecticut, 1972, 1976.

11 - Dale, Philip S., Language Development: Structure and Function, Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, New York, 1976.

Annotated Bibliography

Durkin, Dolores., " Facts About Pre - First Grade Reading." The Kindergarten Child and Reading, International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware, (1977) pages 8 - 19.

This article is written for kindergarten teachers who are interested in acquainting children with reading, in developing skills in preparation for formal reading, and in guiding those who already can read or wish to read. It provides an historical view of attitudes toward teaching reading before grade one, and reviews the related research. The article concludes with the opinion that introducing reading in the kindergarten is not an isolated event, but should involve changes in the entire school's program.

Annotated Bibliography

Warner, Sylvia - Ashton., Teacher, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1963.

This book describes in detail how Warner's method works and how her " little ones " responded to it. The Organic Reading approach of Sylvia Ashton - Warner exploits the words that are expressive of feelings. All learning is based on past experience. This is the fundamental tenet of cognitive learning. Organic Reading utilizes words which are classified as fear words and sex words. Some of the fear words would be: cry, hit, ghost, hate, die, sick, hurt etc. Some of the sex words would be: kiss, love, likes, me etc. A personalized " Key Vocabulary " also includes those words that are a part of the everyday experiences of children; especially those words closely associated with T.V. programs. Vocabulary building is followed by writing. The sentences formed from the Key Vocabulary are " captions to the pictures in the mind." Spelling and composition become an integral part of the writing, with reading as the outcome as well as the medium.

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Current State of the Art

The growth of full - day kindergarten programs across the nation and the recent trend toward accelerating basic skills instruction have combined to make reading and writing in kindergarten an important issue. The question no longer seems to be " should reading and writing be introduced in kindergarten?," but rather, " how should it be introdaced?" That is, what instructional methods or approaches are most appropriate for teaching five year olds how to read and to write?

Currently, we are experiencing a period of excitement about the development to language and literacy. Teachers and administrators are now supporting formal reading and writing in the kindergarten. These persons realize the importance of the early years in the learning process. However, they incorrectly assume that young children learn in the same way as older children do. Reading and writing experiences at school should permit children to build upon their already existing knowledge of oral and written language. Children have had many experiences from which they are building their ideas about the uses of oral and written language. Most five year olds can differentiate between drawings and writings. Many young children are reading environmental print, such as road signs, grocery labels, and fast - food signs. Most kindergarteners associate books with reading.

There are many concerns about the various methodologies used in teaching five year olds to read and to write. Many

children are being subjected to rigid, formal pre - reading programs with inappropriate expectations and experiences for their levels of development. Little attention is given to individual development or to individual learning styles. The pressures of accelerated programs do not allow children to be risk - takers as they experiment with language and internalize concepts about how language operates. Too much attention is focused upon isolated skill development or abstract parts of the reading process, in other words, phonics instruction.

Although phonics instruction or teaching letter/sound corespondences has long been a component of reading instruction, it is associated with methods that are inappropriate for the kindergartener. Phonics skills account for much of the typical basal reading series. Teaching phonics is what most critics mean when they talk about a " skills approach " to teaching reading and compare it unfavorably to a " wholistic " approach. [1] We are all aware that the alphabet letters are the building blocks of our writing system. The child who is able to recognize and name these letters brings important task - specific perceptual knowledge to the learning - to - read effort. There is no one best way to teach the alphabet. It is acknowledged that kindergarten readers should develop some knowledge of letter/sound correspondences, particularly beginning consonants. Phonics, therefore, represents the whole cycle of printed word learning ... from being able to name a few alphabet letters and understand that print is read from left - to - right, to being able to establish

a stable sight vocabulary and to decode or " sound out " unknown words.

Perhaps much of the problem is that phonics instruction comes at an inappropriate time in children's development of understanding about written language, or that the methods used to teach phonics occur without purposes which would make it meaningful. Assuming that children can benefit from phonics instruction at an early age can be put to immediate use by kindergarteners. This depends on associating phonics instruction with children's earliest reading and writing. Invented spelling can be used and is used as a method for using phonics meaningfully in kindergarten classrooms.

Maybe part of the reason teachers do not capitalize on invented spelling is that it is not well understood. Writing, like speech, is a developmental process. Denying a child the opportunity to write is like forbidding a young child from talking until he/she is able to pronounce every word perfectly. We have been routinely told that our spelling and our handwriting reflect aspects of our own personality: neat, tidy, careful. Correct writing presumably indicates a conscientious, sociable, well - educated person. However, is it right to impose such expectations on young children who are just learning the highly complex process of writing?

The methodologies involved in invented spelling must take into account our new - found respect for the quality of ideas. We are becoming a nation of critical readers, which demands a higher quality of thinking behind the written materials we choose to read. It is also necessary to be

aware that children go through stages toward mastery. Children need to work through processes such as reading and writing. Beginning with general approximations of each process, they gradually refine and perfect them, until they are able to manipulate the standard, that is modeled in their environment. " Writing has become too important for us to waste precious time waiting for our writers to first become perfect spellers... since formal spelling lessons do not begin until second or third grade in most schools, we must accept approximations of standard spelling until the standard is learned. " [2]

Invented spelling usually passes through several stages and will blossom if it is accepted without question. Invented spelling ability has been found to correlate with various measures of letter knowledge. Thus, phonics can play its parts. However, Templeton [3] asserts that teaching letter/ sound correspondences would be more productive if the children were at the same time encouraged to write and thus apply their knowledge of letters and sounds.

The first stage of invented spelling involves writing the first letter or phoneme of each word or syllable. For a kindergarten child at this stage, TB would be a satisfactory way of spelling " toy box, " - F would do very well for " Friday." The child would not feel it necessary to segment the word any further.

The second stage child would add the final phoneme of the word or syllable, while omitting the short vowel sounds, as in HL for hill, GRS for grass, RBT for rabbit or WZ for was. At this stage, vowels that say their own

name, such as TE for tea or BOT for boat, are likely to appear.

It is in the third stage, when children begin to separate short vowel sounds from surrounding consonants and attempt to represent them in spelling, that the most interesting results appear. When children want to spell a short vowel sound, they seem to give the vowels that are formed similarly in the mouth equal value and use them interchangeably. They might use the same vowel to represent several different sounds in the same sentence, such as, DORRDY WOTAR for " dirty water." A variety of vowels can represent each vowel sound. Oftentimes, there is no consistancy. At this stage in invented spelling, it is worthy to take note that children seem to recognize the fact that vowel letters functionsdifferently from consonants and are used in a different way.

In the fourth stage, writing moves closer to the standard forms. Sight vocabulary words such as was, to, the, cat etc., are spelled correctly. Digraphs such as sh, ch, and th begin to appear, and the writing tends to be a little longer because each word does not have to laboriously encoded.

The main concern of most teachers who utilize this method of writing in kindergarten is that wrong spelling might develop into a bad habit, that the children might remember their own spellings rather than learning correct ones. However, " children seldom invent the same spelling twice. They seem to attack each word as a new problem, often coming up with a different solution than they had before." [4]

Just as at first the kindergartener is more interested in using the paint or smearing the paste than with what the final picture looks like, it is the act of figuring a word out that intrigues them far more than the conclusion they come to. The final spelling often goes unnoticed. A child may write one letter several times in succession simply because he/she continues saying the sound to himself/herself and forgets that he/she has already written it down. In many cases, children cannot read back what they have just written and almost none can read it back the next day. The product - the way they actually decide to spell the word - appears to be greatly subordinate to the thinking process that leads to the decision. In addition, as soon as children learn the standard spelling for a word, they spontaneously substitute it for their own. For instance, a child may write: IT TRND INTO CRUMS, spelling all words phonetically except " it " and " into " which he/she might have picked up from reading or experience.

Letter knowledge and phonics, therefore, can play an important part in learning how to read and write. Reciting the alphabet does not necessarily indicate letter name knowledge. However, " learning letters through seemingly endless paper and pencil skill drills is of secondary importance for five year olds because there are things of far greater importance for them to learn... we wonder just how this teaches love of learning. [5]

Too often today's kindergarten teachers are issued against their better judgment, the workbooks to go with a

specific K - 6 or K - 8 program adopted by their school or district. Elementary principals sometimes pride themselves on their " articulated " curriculum. This means using the same publishers' wares throughout the school. Often the kindergarten component of these K - 6 or K - 8 programs has been developed by individuals with little or no current teaching experience in today's kindergartens. The results are often watered down first grade tasks, only with more' cutesy pictures and larger print for young children.

Once again, as in years past, educational publishers are eager to profit from this trend. More and more workbooks and ditto master books have been produced to help usually well - meaning teachers help usually agreeable kindergarteners learn that which is of secondary importance for them to learn anyway. The Alpha - Time program of the 1970's is a perfect example of how a phonics program can still be utilized. in the classroom today through creative instruction. There is no end to the lengths a kindergarten teacher can go to with this. Instead of settling for just a workbook - ditto master theme - there is no reason why " delicious donuts " cannot be served to children who are learning about the Letter D. Furthermore, " licking lemon lollipops " for the Letter L or " melting marshmallows " for the Letter M will add a rich variety of experiences to the kindergartener who is faced with learning phonics. When the kindergartener tries to write a word or sentence, he/she must first say each speech sound in sequence as the letters are formed. Early composition, as in the use of invented spelling is a noisy process. Kinder-

garten teachers should instinctively be aware that it is primarily not 'what' you teach, but 'how' you teach that makes for success or failure.

Invented spelling can be taken a step further by encouraging children to write in a daily Journal. The purpose of journal writing is to encourage creativity, provide the opportunity to take risks and increase mastery not only over writing, but also over speaking, reading and listening skills. By personalizing the covers of these journals, children establish ownership of their journals - an important step in the development of confidence in beginning writers. By encouraging young children to use the phonetic principles they know to represent the sounds of words they want to use, the teacher can attempt to release the kindergarten child from the inhibitions caused by the feeling that written work must be correct before it is acceptable. This concept does not come easily for some. The idea of invented spelling can produce mixed feelings within a class. Some children are initially fearful of this extra independence, while invented spelling causes no problems at all for others. Through journal writing, children can communicate ideas either for their own enjoyment or for sharing with others.

Fluency is of primary importance at this stage of writing literacy. Many children write to communicate or deal with their feelings, thus it has a cathartic function as well. Both realistic and imaginative content can be used to work out fears or other strong and troubling emotions.. Some children may write of beloved pets getting lost or

killed; of themselves or siblings getting hurt; of taboo or scary future events. Yet other children describe an isolated concept rather than a narrative in their writing. Many writers reproduce numerals, proper names, or other words either from memory or from print sources they had seen.

As could be expected, both the content and the language of journals usually become more sophisticated during the course of the year. Children should be encouraged to share their work informally with their classmates. In turn, they will learn to show an interest in what their neighbors are writing. Teachers need to be patient and flexible in this method of teaching writing and reading. They must be sensitive also to the personal and emotional aspects of journal writing, which are as important as its linguistic aspects. " Too much pushing or prompting makes the resultant entry too much the teacher's, too little the child's." [7]

Throughout this method of teaching reading and writing to kindergarteners, it is of prime importance to follow the child's lead. Using trial and error, coupled with careful monitoring, the teacher can then decide what is working and what is not. Once again, we are faced with a method of teaching reading and writing that does not rely on textbook guidelines. No ditto masters accompany the methodologies underlying journal writing. Many teachers fear relinquishing their 'chair' so to speak, so that a child may read to the class from his/her journal. When writers - kindergarten, best-seller, or classic level, reveal their

private thoughts, they reveal themselves, and we who are privileged to share in these private thoughts get to know them better. When this revelation occurs in the classroom, teacher and student can come together in a close relationship. Teachers can participate in the life of the sharing child, not just direct it.

The " Big Book " or shared - experience method is a recent approach to teaching beginning reading that has been imported from New Zealand and Australia. Despite the somewhat 'trendy' status big books have in elementary schools of the mid - 1980's, it has become clear that this approach is a highly motivating, theoretically sound teaching method that will be around for a long time. In fact, the Big Book method probably represents one of the most important contributions to the beginning reading field in the last thirty years.

The big books, themselves, have two defining characteristics. First, the pictures and accompanying print are oversized so that a large group of children sitting around a teacher can follow along visually as the teacher reads. Secondly, the language patterns in most big books are natural and rhythmic, oftentimes featuring repetative refrains. As a follow - up activity, the teacher can work with a small group of children, observing individuals' ability to finger-point read small sections of the story - match spoken words to written words in an appropriate manner. Or, the teacher can provide a cassette of the big book and allow individual children the opportunity to follow along on the tape as they turn the pages of the big book.

The method of " Dictated Experience - Stories," sometimes referred to as the language experience approach, is another approach used to teach beginning reading. This method involves using children's own experiences, recorded in their own language, to teach them to read. That is, a shared experience is recounted or dictated by a group of children, written down on paper by the teacher, and then read and re-read by the children with the teacher's support. Early in the year, the teacher may have to use an 'echo - reading' strategy. That is, the teacher reads one or two lines, the child attempts to echo-read these lines while pointing to the words on the page. The teacher can afterwards point randomly to individual words in the text and see if the child can identify them, immediately, or by using context. Kindergarten children will differ considerably in their ability to finger-point read a short, familiar story. Aside from its instructional value, pointing allows the teacher to carefully observe the reading development of individual children.

There are several similarities and two major differences between dictated stories and big books. Both methodologies feature the use of natural language patterns to teach beginning reading as opposed to the stilted, unnatural language found in most basal readers. In both methods, the reading process is continually being modeled by the teacher via her finger-point reading of the text. Children benefit from models they can emulate when they are trying to master complex skills such as reading. Both methods also rely on

memory support and repetition to move the young child into reading. With the memory of a specific text lodged in his/her head, a child can begin to explore how that memorized text is actually represented in lines of print.

One major difference between dictated stories and big books is the language patterns. Dictated stories, by definition, contain the spoken sentence patterns of kindergarten children. Big books, however, contain the written sentence patterns of children's literature. The second important difference is that dictated stories allow kindergarteners to capture and preserve shared classroom experiences by writing them down in their own language. Big books, on the other hand, present new literary experiences - events, vocabulary, sentence pattern - to children. Because of both their underlying similarities and their two important differences, dictated stories and big books complement each other nicely in a beginning reading program.

Poems, particularly four - line Mother Goose rhymes can be thought of as shortened versions of big books. The methodologies involved would basically be the same. The poem can be enlarged on chart paper. It can then be illustrated and eventually choral - read. Teachers can even turn such verses into four - page big books. The use of short poems is especially effective in introducing reading concepts early in the kindergarten year.

The consistant use of these various methodologies will help children develop the concept of word - the awareness of a one-to-one correspondence between written words and

spoken words. It is essential to establish an early recognition of book orientation and directionality: a book has a front and back; a page has a top and bottom; the message is carried by print; the print is read from left to right.

In classrooms that emphasize the reading and writing process as well as the product, children should be treated much more individually. Allowing children to organize their style, choose their own topics, make decisions about length and invent their own spelling removes some of the obstacles in communicating meaning for kindergarteners. Five year olds have distinct personalities and often reveal strong voices in their writing - when encouraged to develop them. Individualization at this age should be allowed and encouraged. This individualization can be illustrated by comparing agriculture with careful gardening. " In agriculture the question of invested input against gross yield is all: it does not matter if individual plants fail to thrive or die so long as the cost of saving them is greater than the cost of losing them. This does not apply to the careful gardener whose labour is not costed, but a labour of love. He wants each of his plants to thrive, and he can treat each one individually. Indeed, he can grow a hundred different plants in his garden and differentiate his treatment for each." [8] Gardening rather than agriculture is the analogy for individualizing the reading and writing methodologies used in the kindergarten.

The underlying fact that remains in teaching kindergarteners to read and write is that all methodologies used need to support

and encourage young children, not correct or shame them. Children need time to develop these competencies. Young children's approximations are developmentally appropriate behaviors. Learning to read and to write takes time, just as learning to walk takes a period of many months and learning to talk takes a period of years. If children are provided with opportunities to write and to read from a meaningful methodology, knowledge about the 'correct' aspects of these two literacy areas will naturally emerge.

Footnotes

1 - Richgels, Donald J., " Experimental Reading With Invented Spelling (ERIS): A Pre-school and Kindergarten Method." The Reading Teacher, February 1987, page 522.

2 - Phinney, Margaret Y., " Invented Spelling." Mothering, Number 43, Spring 1987, page 4.

3 - Templeton, Shane., " Literacy, Readiness, and Basals." The Reading Teacher, Volume 39, January 1986, page 405.

4 - Richgels, Donald J., " An Investigation of Pre-school and Kindergarten Children's Spelling and Reading Abilities." Journal of Research and Development in Education, Volume 19, Number 4, (1986) page 45.

5 - Connell, Donna Reid., " The First 30 Years Were The Fairest: Notes From the Kindergarten and Ungraded Primary (K-1-2)," Young Children, July 1987.

6 - Friedman, Rita and Reiss, Elayne., Alpha-Time, New Dimensions in Education, Inc., Norwalk, Donnecticut, 1976.

7 - Hipple, Marjorie., " Journal Writing in Kindergarten." Language Arts, Volume 62, Number 3, March 1985, page 260.

8 - Hubbard, Ruth,, " Allow Children's Individuality to Emerge in Their Writing: Let Their Voices Through." Young Children, March 1988, page 33.

Annotated Bibliography

Morris, Darrell., " Teaching Reading in Kindergarten: A Language-Experience Approach." National College of Education, Reading Center, Evanston, Illinois, October 1986. pages 4 - 41.

This paper presents current recommendations concerning teaching reading to kindergarten children. One of the concerns listed is that too much attention is focused upon isolated skill development rather than upon the integration of the language arts ... speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is necessary to build instruction in reading on what the child already knows about oral language and print concepts. Risk-taking should be encouraged. In children's first attempts at reading and writing, methodologies should include an acceptance of what appear to be errors, as part of children's natural patterns of growth and development. Included in this paper are descriptions of major instructional techniques and a time-lime illustrating how instruction might evolve across the school year.

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Richgels, Donald J., " Experimental Reading With Invented Spelling (ERIS): A Kindergarten Method." The Reading Teacher, February 1987, pages 522 - 529.

Research has shown that young children's growth as readers and writers is supported by their knowing how to use phonetic cues. This article is based on the assumption that children can benefit from phonics instruction at an early age - that is, that knowledge of letter/sound correspondences can be put to immediate use by kindergarteners. This depends on associating phonics instruction with children's earliest reading and writing, using experimental reading and invented spelling. ERIS has three components: one is to teach sound/letter correspondences; a second component is opportunities for writing; and a third component is opportunities for reading. Both invented spelling and experimental reading must be supported by the teacher's own risk-taking and acceptance of children's efforts. The teacher must allow the kindergarten child to play with written language.

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Needs Assessment

The majority of our nation's schools have provided some measure of relief for struggling first graders by moving part of the curriculum down to the kindergarten, especially reading and writing. More than fifty years of solid child development research tells us strongly that young children are still in the learn-by-doing stage. [1] They learn to distinguish letters by handling plastic or wooden models, by trying to make these symbols out of clay, and by twisting their bodies into these shapes. The five year old kindergartener is the center of his own universe. He must get inside the content before he knows it.

Learning to read and to write in the kindergarten dominates discussions when parents and teachers engage in a dialogue related to school. This is understandable. However, the focus on the product, in this case reading and writing, often becomes the major issue. The key element in this production, the child, is often overlooked.

The general public and the educational establishment assume that most five year olds have equal opportunity to learn the same prescribed curriculum. If some children do not progress satisfactorily, it is assumed that the children have failed, rather than the system or the particular teacher has failed to meet their needs. At age five or six it does not help the self-concept.

In most school systems today, kindergarten children are placed in classrooms regardless of their special needs. Very little, if any, kindergarten children are classified

unless their needs are extraordinarily in need of remediation and easily visible. The greatest need, therefore, is to identify the very young learning disabled kindergartener before he/she considers reading and writing to be unenjoyable and therefore unreachable.

The kindergarten child, in general, often displays problems with hyperactivity, attention span, memory, knowledge transference, coordination, and related skills. However, for learning disabled kindergarteners, learning to read and to write fluently is not an easy task. There is a need to instill positive attitudes toward the task and help these young children become adept at reading many kinds of print.

It is imperative to prepare teachers who are interested in motivating young children and who are sensitive to their special needs. Various methodologies that are rich in opportunities to use language encourage the kindergarten child to make choices and be responsible for learning. " Too often activity centers for art, dramatic play, block building, or music are often labeled as 'just play' and relegated to a frills catefory." [2] The relatedness to building foundations for reading and writing is not as obvious for these centers.

Anyone who at some time has been held mental hostage by a catchy advertising jingle can appreciate the need for using music as a methodology for teaching reading to a kindergarten child. It has been known that young children can rattle off entire commercials or sing their ABC's to music, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of music as a memory aid. There is also experimental support for music as an aid to recall for mentally retarded or slow learners. [3] It has

been theorized been theorized that heightened attention and novelty in musical stimuli contribute to improved recall of information. [4]

The methodology of using music to enhance kindergarteners learning to read should capitalize on and integrate features that are known to develop recall. An example would be the use of a method which chunks or organizes information to be remembered. This approach is an outgrowth of Miller's [5] research, in which he found that short-term memory capacity was 7 ± 2 bits of information. Human memory capacity increases through the process of grouping isolated bits of information in organized subgroups or chunks. The kindergartener's Alphabet Song provides an example of the application of this theory. The proper sequence of letters in the alphabet includes twenty-six separate and unrelated bits of information. As the song is sung, the letters are broken into groups of 7 ± 2, "A,B,C,D,E,F,G,....H,I,J,K,L,M,N,O,P," etc, which also rhymes on the final syallable. This chunking process aids the recall of the sequence of letters.

Mere repetition is not an effective method of using musical memory devices. Kindergarten teachers may provide some variety and possibly increase children's attention by developing musical mneumonics consisting of rhythmic speech or short, simple melodies. The mneumonics can be developed in many ways. The kindergarten teacher can also make up his/her own tunes. For those who are not adept at writing simple melodies, rhythmic speech or writing new lyrics to popular tunes or commercials can be used.

Rather than choosing a prepackaged musical tape or unfamiliar music, the young child should be encouraged to select a favorite song or perhaps create his own melody to accompany the information to be remembered. This will help them to associate the new material with previously known information, and hopefully increase their motivation and attention. In addition, it helps the children to become active participants in their own learning process. [6]

Memory drills for a kindergarten child are time consuming and fail to contribute to a clear understanding of information. It is crucial that the teacher of young children utilizes these methods of aiding memory as tools. In short, the mneumonic aid is a tool toward the larger goal of teaching the five year old to read and to write. It is not an end in and of itself.

Another methodology which is needed for early success in reading and writing is the use of picture books based on song lyrics. These books vary from single song editions to song collections of widely differing style and content. They vary in type and content, from lullabies, and nursery rhymes to animal, holiday or folk songs. They vary in artistic style, from illustrations done in watercolors to pen and ink sketches. All song picture books share one valuable distinction- they possess rich potential for child involvement.

Activities involving musical involvement can promote the development of competence in phonics and grammar. For language-disabled young kindergarteners who have difficulty discriminating and producing speech sounds, the learning of songs through using picture books can offer opportunities to

overcome these problems. Participation in singing repetitive refrains from these books can help develop two specific aspects of phonological competence: auditory discrimination and pronunciation skills, as well as general listening skills and a heightened awareness of language.

Song picture books can also be used to encourage production of appropriate syllable pattern. Kindergarteners can be introduced to syllable structure of a sentence by replacing a single descriptive phrase. Verses in a story song like, " She'll Be Comin' Round The Mountain" can provide children with opportunities for producing new syllable patterns and many new verses can be composed orally or in writing:

Original: She'll be comin' round the mountain when she comes.
Model: She'll be (1 syllable) + ing (4 syllables) when she comes.
Example 1: She'll be hopping like a bunny when she comes.
Example 2: She'll be kissing all the babies when she comes. [7]

New lyrics can be written on chart paper or duplicated so that each child has a copy. Some picture books can also promote vocabulary growth. Most song lyrics repeat words, particularly in the chorus. This repetition can be a pleasurable experience for language-disabled kindergarteners, as well as provide opportunities for hearing and practicing the pronunciation of words in a natural way.

In the counting song " Roll Over " [8] these lines are repeated ten times:

There were ten in a bed
And the little one said
Roll over! Roll over!
So they all rolled over
And one fell out....

The song continues by inserting numbers in descending order until, in the final verse, the little one says: " Alone! At Last!"

In this way children are given ample opportunity to encounter the same sight words over and over again and develop vocabulary in the meaningful context of song verses.

Some lyrics, with their special motivational appeal, can serve as reading materials for language-disabled kindergarteners who have experienced failure in the basal reader or phonics workbook. For the five year old who has difficulty recognizing the correspondence between thought and words or written and spoken words, song lyrics can be helpful. Many songs for children are available in both record and picture book format and children can listen to them while following along visually in the printed material.

Some picture books that are accompanied by recorded lyrics can allow the young language-impaired child to be a 'music director' who leads the class in song. When lyrics have been printed on the chalkboard or on chart paper and placed where the class can see them, the child can point to each word as the class sings along with the record. This activity can provide opportunities for developing the important knowledge that written words correspond to words that are both spoken and sung.

There are many favorite classroom songs that lack companion books. Efforts to design song charts or illustrated books for these lyrics can foster the development of general language competence as well as semantic understandings. Inventive Spelling and the freedom to make mistakes take on additional significance if the child's song book is to be used as a guide for singing. Individual song books made by the children can reinforce reading ability.

Kindergarten teachers who are able to use song picture books as a methodology for teaching reading and writing can share this genre of children's literature with young children who exhibit mild-moderate language delays or disorders. Used appropriately, these books can facilitate the development of language competence, which is the basis for concept formation and learning. Positive experiences with this appealing form of printed material can promote early success in language reception and expression.

Another methodology that is needed for teaching reading and writing to kindergarteners is using children's literature that is written in a predictable format. These books are written in a rhythmical, repetitive pattern, making it easy for children to begin predicting what will be on the next page. The text is usually coherent and uncontrived, using the natural redundancy, rhythm, and rhyme of language to achieve its regularity. " Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" [9] is an example of one type of predictable book, the repetitive book. The author repeats words, phrases, or themes, and this pattern can be easily discerned after reading only a few pages:

> Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?
> I see a Redbird looking at me.
> Redbird, Redbird, what do you see?
> I see a Yellow Duck looking at me.
> Yellow Duck, Yellow Duck, what do you see?
> I see a Blue Horse looking at me....

Other predictable books use a cumulative pattern in which previous ideas are incorporated into subsequent ones, for example, The Gingerbread Boy. A third type of predictable book uses familiar sequences as the predictable characteristic.

In " The Very Hungry Caterpillar," [10] Eric Carle uses two of these familiar sequences: days of the week and numbers. All three types of predictable stories provide the regularity needed by learning disabled children as well as providing enhanced motivation to the typical kindergartener.

An effective method of providing access to the text is to create an enlarged version of it. The 'big book' can be used for both group instruction and later independent reading. A teacher could write the text in large print and invite the children to create their own accompanying pictures. Children can be asked to match word and phrase cards. There are many opportunities to teach phonic and word analysis skills if a youngster needs reinforcement in these areas. The child could also categorize individual sight word cards into those which start the same, rhyme, have similiar vowel sounds etc. Phonic games similiar to those used in other reading programs can be played. Phonic skills are a part of the predictable book instructional method. The difference is that children are aware of the context from which the phonic elements came and they understand how knowledge of sounds relates to the whole task of reading. Comparing 'bear' and 'blue' is an easier task when the child understands why such a discrimination is necessary.

A teacher can create 'cloze' exercises in which words are deleted from the text at regular intervals. The child must supply the missing words by using the context. Kindergarteners who need manipulative experiences could fit their word cards into the blanks. The possibilities of this methodology are endless, limited only by the teacher's ingenuity and the

individual needs of the children.

A methodology that is needed as a kind of input to writing is visuals. The word input consciously suggests that a major responsibility is needed by teachers to motivate writing. Many experts have commented about the validity of having children dictate or write a story line as shown in the sequential pictures in wordless books. [11] The built-in story structure provided by the artist is a help, especially to kindergarten writers who are just beginning to develop some intuitive grasp about how stories are made. Providing the structure of pictures allows ample opportunity for creativity, yet gives young writers an organizational framework within which to write.

To further stimulate writing, the teacher can provide reproductions of artist's paintings about which children can write. It is a simple matter to share a reproduction with children, and encourage them to respond positively or negatively to the painting. As a follow-up to this group oral language experience, children may choose a painting they like, and make up a short story about it, using inventive spelling techniques.

Young children can also be encouraged to make preference statements about various visuals. For instance, noting likenesses or differences or liking one or the other of two books or a film. Visuals, therefore, can be an effective method for stimulating writing in kindergarteners.

A creative and unique methodology for teaching reading and writing that is needed more in the kindergarten is the use of cooking projects in the classroom. Cooking projects seem to

be natural motivators. Obtaining an edible product requires reading simple directions and following them sequentially. It requires reading and comprehending large commonly used words such as chocolate, marshmallows, measure, teaspoon, bake, etc. Kindergarteners build sight vocabulary and comprehension skills as they study recipes. They do not tune out reading a recipe they help prepare, and it is practice without pain. Recipes can be written on large chart paper and illustrated by the children. Some products can be eaten right away, but others must cool. If the children eat together the next day, they can re-read how their goodies were made. There will exist an overall good will toward reading. Additional reading can be encouraged when the teacher ties in books about the history of popcorn or holiday foods, for example.

There is a huge need for using creativity and ingenuity in the methodologies used for teaching reading and writing to kindergarteners. Using music, song picture books, predictable books, big books, and an array of visuals are some of ways reading and writing can be greatly enhanced. It is the main responsibility of the kindergarten teacher to provide the impetus to read and to write at this level. Five and six year olds are on the roads to future success in school when they are given the right opportunities.

Footnotes

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2 - McCarthy, Jan., " Listen To My Ideas and I Will Read: a Case For Kindergarten Experiences." Reading: The Core of Learning, June, 1983, page 36.

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11 - Herman, Gertrude B., " Books Without Words: Picture Stories Bring Thought, Imagination, Delight." Wisconsin Library Bulletin, July 1976, pages 151-152.

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Gemake, Dr. Josephine., " Getting Kids To Respond To Print Through Interactive Reading." Early Years K-8, November/ December 1985, pages 38 - 39.

This article presents 'interactive reading' as a personal child-oriented approach to reading. The process invites children to respond to the printed page in a special was by allowing them to create drawings and write ideas that extend and complement the story text. The children's reactions thus become an interesting and integral part of the story. The interactive reading program works toward:

- stimulating interest and creativity for able and disabled readers alike.
- giving children the opportunity to demonstrate their intuitive understanding of story grammar as they predict actions and anticipate story events.
- promoting problem solving and decision making as children complete stories in their individual styles.
- offering children a very enjoyable way to respond to print.

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Research has shown that using predictable books with learning disabled children can be a rewarding experience. Since the method is theoretically sound and meets their developmental needs, these children often experience success with it. They frequently become lifetime readers - individuals who read efficiently for information and enjoyment. These considerations as well as the ease with which the ideas can be integrated with current programs, make the use of predictable books a viable alternative or welcome supplement to other methods of reading instruction.

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New Directions

Although questions of the use and effectiveness of computers in education are raised at all levels, these questions are debated most passionately about future early childhood programs. Can computers help build reading and writing skills in kindergarten? Research has not answered this question definitively.

Computer use seems to provide a vehicle for two types of interaction: child-computer and child-child. Child-computer interaction depends to a great extent on the software. Child-child interaction at the computer seems to depend on the arrangement of the environment as well as on the selection of software. Two or three chairs placed at the computer can enable children to discuss problems and assist each other with possible solutions.

A specific program that has had substantial success in kindergartens is " Writing to Read." [1] Children work with computers, typewriters and tape recorders in both preparatory activities and story writing using a simplified phonetic alphabet. Kindergarteners effectively learned to read and write better than those in comparison groups.

For kindergarten children in general, spoken language provides them control over their environment. Their written language is scarce in comparison. Future use of the computer can infuse writing with control and power. The written word can create animated pictures and stories that can be heard. They can also reduce the tedium of writing. Researchers do know that the benefit of using computers is in

providing support for kindergarten writers. [2] Children can experiment with letters and words without being distracted by the fine motor aspects of handwriting. Beginning writers learn to name letters, sound out words, invent spelling, express ideas, and write simple sentences. Perhaps more importantly, five year olds can learn to use the computer as a tool for exploration and experimentation. A talking version of a word processor is a method that may also be used as the spoken feedback needed to foster an awareness to edit. However, word processors will not support children's writing without corresponding support from the teacher.

Although computer literacy is increasingly required for elementary and secondary teacher certification, few states have computer literacy requirements at the kindergarten level. Not surprisingly, early childhood programs frequently go outside their own ranks to find instructors. The teaching methods for computer literacy programs at the kindergarten level should rely most strongly on hands-on experience. This emphasis is consistant with the overall learn-by-doing approach of good early childhood education programs.

Kindergarten children do not need computers any more than they need any of many potentially valuable learning centers. There is, however, nothing to lose and potentially rich benefits to acquire through informed use of computers with young children. Effectiveness depends critically on the quality of the software, the amount of time it is used and the methodologies which are used. The strength of quality computer applications in future kindergartens is not that they replace the teacher, but that they allow the teacher to

focus on the human parts of teaching. As one kindergartener wrote to her teacher:

> " I liket the tip riter Best of all
> and I like to work with you.
> And I likt lisoning to the story's
> But best I like working with you." [3]

Another future methodology for teaching reading and writing in the kindergarten that is beginning to gain popularity is called 'Whole Language.' Whole Language instruction begins with functional language and moves through a full range of written language, including all types of literature. Whole Language teachers believe that when children are immersed in language through reading, writing, being read to, observing and listening, reading behavior emerges naturally.

Instead of using basal readers or pre-packaged programs, kindergarten teachers use a wide variety of literature such as trade books, Big Books, poems, magazine and newspaper articles, comic strips, posters and advertisements. Through these materials, children discover how language is used. Listening to selected stories and participating in choral reading and storytelling all help the kindergartener to model their oral language.

The Whole Language approach to reading and writing relates activities to a single theme. For example, a theme on 'Bears' might last several months. Brainstorming allows children to contribute their unique language and knowledge about the topic to the class. As children respond, the teacher records ideas, words or pictures. This list provides a word bank for later activities. Brainstorming also serves

as a diagnostic tool. When a teacher hears what children already know or misunderstand about Bears, for example, activities can be planned to correct or enrich this information.

Writing is an integral part of Whole Language classrooms. Ideas are expressed in journals, or by conducting research and other writing activities. Rehearsal, writing, editing, publishing and sharing ideas with each other, again immerse kindergarteners in the language of literature. The emphasis is on reading and writing without worrying about proper spelling and punctuation.

With whole language, homogeneous skill-based groups are replaced by cooperative groups, interest groups and temporary skill groups to help children learn from each other. Interest groups might include children who research brown bears together. Cooperative groups might read poems about bears and then illustrate what they have read. Temporary skill groups might be composed of children who write better in a group than individually. They jointly write a story about bears in the zoo, for example.

Whole language fosters the idea that one person is no better than another. As kindergarteners, children learn to value themselves and each other, and become lifelong learners, communicators and sharers. These skills will support them far beyond their classrooms.

When children are not grouped by skill level, they seem to achieve beyond expectations. Why did they do so well? " They didn't know they couldn't." [4] Since there were no groupings by level, all children believed they could, and they could! Whole Language methodologies produce young

readers and writers who believe in themselves as learners. These beliefs will support each child in a lifetime of joyful learning.

The future for methodologies of teaching reading and writing to kindergarteners is filled with creative possibilities. Kindergarteners are very vulnerable creatures and their development requires focused and sensitive nurturing. The kindergartener must first and foremost be motivated to learn to read and to write. Art supplies, matching sound and letter-word games, computers, Big Books, music, inventive spelling, and so many more activities tempt the five year old to learn. The more an activity provices opportunity to succeed, the more motivating it is likely to be. Kindergarteners can indeed learn to read and to write. However, the methodologies used for this learning can mean the difference between merely acquiring these skills, or finding joy in these skills. When reading and writing are successful and enjoyable experiences in the classroom, the result is an enthusiasm towards learning that is never ending.

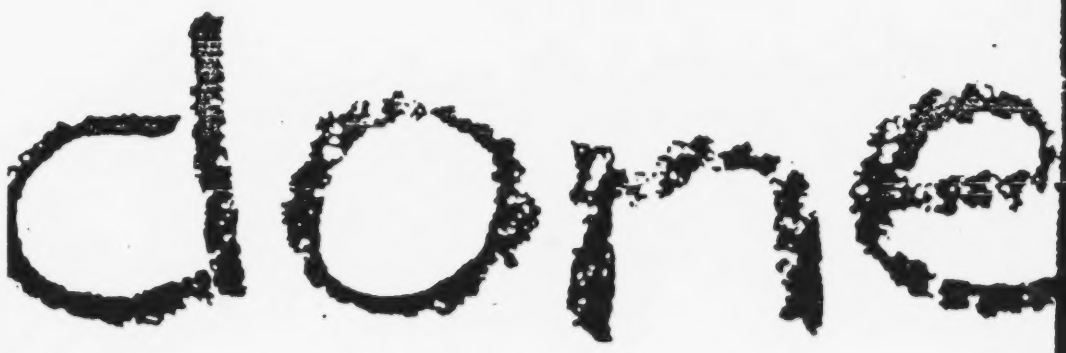
help !!!

I'm trying hard to learn to read
But what's a kid to do
When there's a NO and a GO and a SO and a HO
And then there's a word like TO?

Reading BONE and CONE and LONE and TONE
Can almost be kind of fun,
But I get upset when I have to believe
That D-O-N-E spells DONE!

It's plain to see a kid like me
Sure needs a helping hand.
No matter how much I really try
I just don't understand.

I'm trying hard to learn to read.
Somehow that's what I'll do.
But for now if you'll just read to me
Someday I'll read to you.



12 Inspired by Dorsey Hammond

Footnotes

1 - Murphy, R.T.,and Appel, L.R.,"Evaluation of Writing To Read," Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, 1984, page 121.

2 - Rosegrant, T.J., " Using a Micro-computer To Assist Children In Their Efforts To Acquire Beginning Literacy." American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April, 1985, page 342.

3 - Wallace, J.M., " Write First, Then Read." Educational Leadership, 1985, page 23.

4 - Ferguson, Phyllis,, " Whole Language: A Global Approach To Learning." Instructor, May 1988, page 27.

5 - Halloran, Phyllis., I'd Like To Hear A Flower Grow and Other Poems, Illustrations, 1985, page 18.

Annotated Bibliography

Ferguson, Phyllis., " Whole Language: A Global Approach To Learning." Instructor, May 1988, pages 24-27.

This article focuses on Whole Language. As a philosophy approach or simply future inspiration, it is capturing many teachers' imaginations across the country. Whole Language suggests that children learn language skills by following the natural learning behavior that governs the way they learn to talk. Whole Language does away with basal readers and traditional teaching methods. Children should be encouraged in their early attempts at reading and writing without worrying about proper spelling and punctuation. More important, perhaps, is that writing, listening, reading and speaking activities should grow from a child's experience and interests.

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Anselmo, Sandra and Zinck, Ann R., " Computers For Young Children? Perhaps." Young Children, May 1987, pages 22-27.

Research has shown that many kindergarten children can be successful, independent computer users for sustained periods of time. While this high level of interest may be a positive feature,there is some danger that the time spent with computers could detract from other valuable learning experiences. Teachers are encouraged to ensure a balance in children's self-directed activities. The vision of the future does not imply a computer dominated classroom. Computers are not an end in themselves, but a means to an end. Computers can supplement, but do not substitute for, experiences in which children can discover with all their senses.

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